

**FREMONT OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE MEETING
DECEMBER 16, 2003
FREMONT TOWN HALL 7:00 pm.**

MINUTES

7:05 pm. Co-Chairperson Janice O'Brien called the meeting to order.

Secretary Noreen Johnson read the minutes of the December 9, 2003 meeting. Minutes approved unanimously.

Janice explained that this meeting was a joint meeting with members of Fremont Conservation Commission to clarify the role of their commission and the role of the Open Space Committee. 4 members of the Conservation Commission were present. Chairperson John Whiteside, Tracy LaChance, John Karcz and Andy Anderson. Absent were: Bill Knee, Kathy Braun, and Brad Houston.

John Whiteside, Chairman of the Conservation Commission called his meeting to order and explained that there will be two meetings going on at the same time.

John explained that the Conservation Commission has focused on wetlands in Fremont. Our Prime wetland Spruce Swamp is the 2nd largest in the state of New Hampshire and largest in Rockingham County. To name Spruce Swamp a Prime Wetland passed by 86% vote at annual meeting in March 2003. In the process of researching the information on Spruce Swamp John was in touch with many NH agencies including the Society for the Protection of NH Forests who informed him that open land in Fremont needs to be protected also if Fremont is to remain a rural community. After meeting with selectmen, school board members and others he proposed an Open Space Committee to be formed.

John explained how a Bond works. He attended a one-day "Bond School" sponsored by Citizens Bank. Bond should come by Petition of 25 registered voters. It is necessary to decide on petition wording which he had researched and had a sample to present. It had been reviewed by attorneys and is a legal document as written.

Discussion followed as to the wording of the petition and if we wanted to change the wording slightly. It was decided to use general wording rather than specific wording in the Petition. A vote was taken – Unanimous vote for the general wording petition.

Who sponsors this petition? The next step was to recommend this petition to the Conservation Commission, as the Open Space Committee is a sub-committee of the C.C. If approved the C.C. sponsors this petition on the warrant.

A discussion followed regarding the amount of money to be requested on this petition. John Whiteside explained his research of town records and town reports since 1990.

Janice reported on figures from Phil Auger...Fremont has 11,026 acres of upland...11,142 total land area. As of 1998 only 292 acres were conserved. It was suggested we try to conserve 25% or 2,750 acres. He also suggested that the fair market value of large properties in Fremont is \$5, to \$10,000 per acre. Most easements are in the range of 40 to 60% of FMV. If we wanted to conserve 1,000 acres with an FMV average of \$7,500 an acre and an easement value of 50% of that total dollar amount for just conservation would be \$3,750,000. We need to add 5 to 10% for transaction costs. So a \$4 million bond would not be unusual to conserve at least 1,000 acres.

John Whiteside had comparable figures from his research.

A discussion followed about the amount of the Bond.

An informal vote was taken and 9 residents voted for \$3 million and 8 for \$4 million. Some of the 22 residents in attendance did not vote. Gene Cordes, Chairperson of the Selectmen responded to a question asking if he thought Selectmen would support a \$3 million or \$4 million bond. He explained that when he first spoke to John Whiteside about a bond it was pertaining to the uplands and area around Spruce Swamp, now we are including more properties in town. He could not answer for the selectmen concerning the new amount discussed. More discussion concerning the amount to request followed.

8:45 pm: a vote was taken for the bond amount to be 4 million dollars. Unanimously approved.

This amount was recommended to the 4 Conservation Committee members present and they unanimously approved the Open Space Committees recommendation and to rescind their previous vote for a \$2 million bond for Spruce Swamp.

Chairperson O'Brien thanked everyone for their input. We completed two very important tasks this evening, the wording of the petition and the Bond amount.

Next Meeting, Tuesday, December 23rd Town Hall 7:00 pm.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Submitted by:

Noreen Johnson
Secretary